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ABSTRACT

Data were collected from elementary principals before and after their participation for a year in a beginning teacher internship program (BTIP). Principals' expectations were compared with their actual experiences. Their attitudes and views before the start of the year were compared with their attitudes and views at the close of the year. The relationships among principal, mentor, and beginning teacher were explored. Near the beginning and the end of their first year of working in the BTIP, 84 principals (70%) completed instruments that collected their expectations/experiences, attitudes, and views of BTIP. Analysis of the data from the questionnaires suggested that intern-mentor programs have mostly positive impacts on beginning teachers. Principals confirmed that student teaching was important to beginning teachers and teacher preparation programs should provide courses that can help beginning teachers learn how to manage class discipline and motivate students. Principals reported that beginning teachers adjusted more readily to teaching responsibility than the principals had expected, and that teachers and mentors readily discussed areas of concern with less embarrassment or breaches of confidentiality than principals had expected. (JD)

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by

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Principals' Judgments of Experiences with Beginning Teacher Internship Program

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Introduction

Indiana started a Beginning Teacher Internship Program (BTIP) in 1988-1989 to help beginning teachers to adjust quickly and effectively with the teaching environment and to increase their skills in teaching strategies. Specific responsibilities for principals as they supervised new teachers and their assigned mentor-teachers were an important component of the BTIP.

Responsibilities of principals as required in the Indiana Internship Rule included a) assist beginning teachers in the performance of their duties; b) evaluate the performance of beginning teachers; and c)decide whether to recommend them for certification(Beginning Teacher Internship Program Handbook, 1988).

Many studies provide models and outline principals' responsibilities in induction programs for beginning teachers (Huling- Austin & Emmer, 1985). The models and statements of responsibilities in the literature focus on topics other than the expectations, attitudes, and views of principals as these principals participated in beginning teacher and mentor programs.

Purpose of the Study

Will there be significant differences between the expected and actual experiences of principals who supervised beginning elementary teachers? Data were collected from principals before and after their participation for a year in the Beginning Teacher Internship Program. Principals' expectations were compared with their actual experiences. Their attitudes and their views before the start of the year were compared with their attitudes and views at the close of the year.

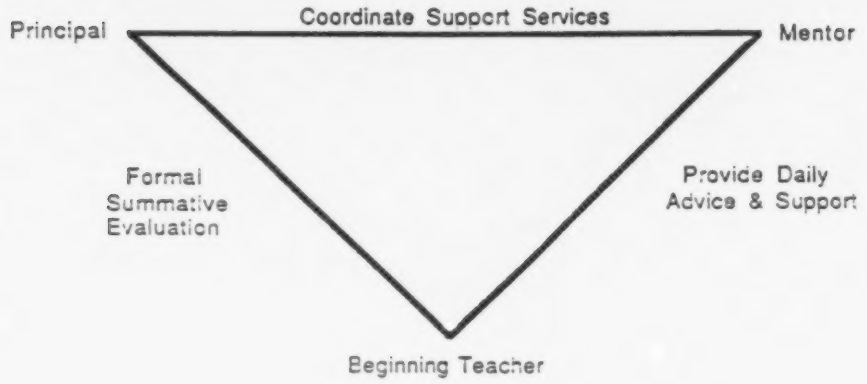
Literature Review

Mentoring has been practiced for a long time. The term derives from the Greek mythology. Odysseus's asked his friend Mentor to direct and guide Telemachus his son for twenty years. In the 1960's and 1970's, business and industry touted mentoring as an indispensable helping hand by which one would be pulled up the corporate ladder. In the 1980's writers in education began to use the term (Shute, & et al. 1989). Teachers mentoring teachers was identified as one effective method of staff development (Ishler & Kester, 1987).

Applegate (1987) confirmed that principals were rarely involved in selection of teachers but assumed major responsibility for supervising those who are selected to teach.

In the academic year, 1989, the Beginning Teacher Internship Program was instituted state-wide in Indiana. The relationships among principal, mentor, and beginning teacher can be seen as the following figure:

The Relationships among Principal, Mentor & Beginning Teacher



Population and Methodology

Near the beginning and the end of their first year of working in the BTIP, eighty-four elementary principals completed Principals Questionnaire instruments (return rate 70%) that collected their expectations/experiences, attitudes, and views of BTIP.

Changes in principals' responses from the start to the end of their first year's experiences with BTIP were compared using a t test at a .05 alpha level of confidence. Open-ended questions were interpreted using descriptive methods.

The instruments used in this study were designed by the researchers specifically for use in this study and modified by a jury of four professional experts. These instruments were designed to determine the elementary principals' expectations/experiences, attitudes, and views of experiences connected with BTIP for the academic year of 1989.

Findings

At the end of the year, two experiences of principals were more positive than they had expected at the beginning of the year. Principals reported that beginning teachers actually adjusted more readily to teaching responsibility than principals had expected. Teachers and mentors more readily discussed areas of concern and with less embarrassment or breaches of confidentiality than principals had expected.

At the end of the year, principals agreed that their experiences had contradicted their expectations in three areas. Meetings between mentors and beginning teachers to provide opportunities for mentors to assist beginning teachers with problems were less successful than principals had expected. Teachers and mentors experienced less professional growth than principals expected. Help from mentors contributed less to beginning teacher effectiveness than principals expected (see Table 1).

Table 1

Comparisons of Mean Scores of Expectations at the Beginning of the Program with Mean Scores of Their Actual Experiences at the End of the Year by Elementary Principals

Variable	N	M 1/M2	SD 1/2	t Test Prob
1.INFORMED ABOUT BTIP	75	4.25/4.21	0.79/.84	.738
2.ADJUST TO TEACHING RESPONSIBILITY	75	3.84/4.08	0.52 /.69	.015*
3.SHARE INFORMATION W/ MENTOR	76	4.11/4.05	0.67/.65	.590
4.DEVELOP COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIP W/ MENTOR	76	4.07/4.07	0.74/.90	1.00
5.SHARE PROFESSIONAL STRENGTHS W/ MENTOR	75	3.96/3.83	0.78/.74	.199
6.SHARE PROFESSIONAL LIMITATIONS W/ MENTOR	76	3.70/3.71	0.75 /.73	.896
7.CREATE RELATIONSHIP W/ MENTOR TO DISCUSS CONCERN	76	3.57/3.99	0.79/.77	<.001*
8.MEETINGS FOR MENTOR TO ASSIST PROBLEM SOLVING	76	4.33/4.13	0.58/.62	.021*
9.WORK W/MENTOR TOWARD EDUCATIONAL GOALS	75	4.03/4.05	0.57/.61	.765
10.EXPERIENCE PROFESSIONAL GROWTH W/ MENTOR	75	4.28/3.91	0.67/.77	<.001*
11.IMPROVE SELF CONCEPT	74	4.04/3.91	0.65/.71	.175
12.BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE HELPED BY MENTOR	74	4.22/3.93	0.67/.58	.003*
13.BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE HELPED BY ADVISOR	8	3.00/3.13	0.76/1.25	.685

Note: M 1 stands for Beginning Mean. M2 stands for Ending Mean.
SD 1 stands for Beginning Standard Deviation. SD 2 stands for Ending Standard Deviation.
t Test Prob means probability that the t test of differences in scores was statistically significant.
Means were measured on a 5-point scale.
* Significant at p< .05

Three attitudes of principals were more positive than they had perceived at the beginning of the year. Principals strongly agreed that mentors interfered less with beginning teachers' personal lives than principals had expected. Principals agreed supportive principals can do less to improve beginning teachers' performance than they had thought. Principal' reported beginning teachers' student teaching had less value in preparing teachers to be effective than principals had expected.

Four attitudes of principals were less positive than they had expected. Principals concluded that giving serious consideration to new ideas was less necessary for maximum success of both mentors and beginning teachers than principals had earlier judged. Principals had judged that learning new and different teaching strategies would make beginning teachers more confident, but later concluded this was not so. Command of a wide range of teaching strategies did not increase confidence and self-esteem of beginning teachers' as principals had judged. Supportive relationships with other teachers did not make a positive difference in beginning teachers' as principals had judged(see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparisons of Mean Scores of Attitudes at the Beginning of the Program with Mean Scores of Attitudes at the End of the Year by Elementary Principals

Variable	N	M1/M 2	SD 1/2	t Test Prob.
14.CONSIDERATION TO NEW IDEAS	74	4.31/3.73	0.64/.73	<.001*
15. MENTOR SHOULD NOT INTERFERE BT PERSONAL LIFE	75	4.04/1.37	0.94 /.56	<.001*
16.LEARNING STRATEGIES MAKE BT MORE CONFIDENT	73	4.27/ 4.01	0.53/.57	.002*
17. SUPPORTIVE PRINCIPAL CAN DO LITTLE TO IMPROVE BT'S PERFORMANCE	75	1.23/ 3.52	0.42/.74	<.001*
18. WIDE RANGE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES INCREASE BT'S SELF-ESTEEM	75	4.27/3.91	0.66/.62	.001*
19. SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIP W/OTHER TEACHERS POSITIVE IN BT'S TEACHING	75	4.60/ 4.24	0.49/.46	<.001*
20.BT'S STUDENT TEACHING HAS LITTLE VALUE	75	1.80/2.07	0.85/1.00	.038*
21. BT'S METHODS COURSES AT THE UNIVERSITY HAVE GREAT VALUE TO BT	73	3.11/ 3.16	0.89/.85	.645
22. BT BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE W/HELP FROM TEACHER OTHER THAN MENTOR	75	3.81/ 3.60	0.67/.81	.081
23. ALL NEW TEACHERS IN INDIANA WOULD PROFIT IN BTIP	75	3.44/3.57	1.02/1.04	.357

Note: BT stands for Beginning Teacher.

M 1 stands for Beginning Mean. M2 stands for Ending Mean.

t Test Prob means probability that t test of differences in scores was statistically significant.

Means were measured on a 5 point scale.

* Significant at p< .05

There were no significant changes in principals' views from before to the end of the year. Principals' reported views of BTIP included a) classroom management and discipline were the most difficult teaching responsibilities for beginning teachers (pre N=81; post N=47); b) meeting for beginning teachers with mentors twice a week would be appropriate (pre N=48; post N=32); c) assistance that beginning teachers needed the most were classroom management and discipline(pre N=61; post N=39); d) the seminar was of most benefit to beginning teachers was on providing feedback for students (pre N=59; post N=35); and e) principals judged one area they have most need was communication with beginning teachers in constructive ways (pre N=36; post N=21).

Principals gave positive responses when asked to suggest changes they would make if they were in charge of the Beginning Teacher Internship Program. Suggested changes included: Provide time for mentors, teachers and principals to communicate (N=11); provide training for all involved (N=7); pay the principals, pay more to the mentors, and pay for substitutes in order for mentors and beginning teachers to observe each other (N=3); and reduce the paper work (N=2).

Overall, principals reported positive feelings about the BTIP (pre N=97; post N=76). Principals suggested that: a) both pre-service and in-service training are necessary for interns, b) principals can pick mentors, c) pay the principals or let the mentors assume more evaluation responsibilities, and d)every participant should be trained at the same time.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Analysis of data from the principals questionnaire suggested intern-mentor programs have mostly positive impacts on beginning teachers. Principals reported a persistence view of Beginning Teacher Internship Program before and after participating BTIP for a year. Principals confirmed that student teaching was important to beginning teachers and teacher preparation institute should provide courses which can help beginning teachers learn how to manage class disciplines and motivate students.

In one interesting finding, two principals reported "principals need mentors too". Providing necessary training for principals might increase the effectiveness of mentoring programs. Another interesting finding is principals did not perceived relationships between mentors and beginning teachers made a positive difference in beginning teachers teaching. Supportive principals can do little to improve beginning teachers performance. More involvement of principals and other administrative support should be considered to improve mentoring programs.

There were many useful ways in which principals helped beginning teachers. This study yielded some significant differences in principals' perceptions and attitudes. Since mentoring programs are mandated in many states, the researchers based on this study suggest the following recommendations in implementing mentoring.

1. Principals should be appropriately reimbursed for their efforts in order to encourage more effective participation with mentors and beginning teachers.

2. Principals should be given thorough preparation by including recommendations from the literature pertinent to teacher development, new teacher needs and concerns, effective teaching, adult professional development, and performance appraisal.
3. Principals should be more involved in mentoring programs. This includes the following: selecting mentors and teachers, conducting first-year teachers' orientation, and introducing first-year teachers to other faculty and staff.
4. Principals should provide more administrative support to beginning teachers. This includes: being realistic about assignment of courses and duties to beginning teachers, and being visible during the first few days of classes for beginning teachers.
5. Principals should be well informed of mentoring programs. Provide veteran principals as mentors for principals if there is a need.

Mentoring can be very effective if done appropriately. Principals are leaders in schools. More principals' involvement and commitment to the mentoring programs can help beginning teachers to remain in the teaching profession. Further, mentoring can increase the effectiveness of orientation to teaching.